

**Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2008
BLM Ely Field Office
Ely, Nevada**

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Larry Barngrover | (2) Wildlife |
| Kevin Lee | (1) Transportation/ROW |
| Kirk Nicholes | (1) Energy/Minerals |
| Dave Tattam | (2) Wild Horse and Burro |
| Neal Frakes | (2) Environmental |

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Mike Brown | Public Affairs Officer, Elko District |
| Ken Miller | District Manager, Elko District |
| John Ruhs | District Manager, Ely District |
| Jerry Smith | District Manager, Battle Mountain District |
| Stephanie Trujillo | Administrative Assistant, Ely District |
| Jeff Weeks | Assistant Field Manager, Ely District |
| Chris Worthington | NEPA Coordinator, Battle Mountain District |

Other Attendees

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Pat Irwin | District Ranger, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest |
| Kathy Smith | Public |
| Marrietta Carson | Public |
| Julie Thompson | Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition |

9:00 a.m. Acting Chairman Dave Tattam welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Everyone introduced themselves.

Several RAC members were unable to attend the meeting at the last minute because U.S. 93 south of Wells was closed due to a 6.0 earthquake.

I. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- Changes were provided by Jerry Smith, approval of minutes will be at the Battle Mountain meeting (April 24, 2008) due to lack of quorum.

II. NEPA OVERVIEW

Chris Worthington from the Battle Mountain District Office gave the NEPA presentation.

- National Environmental Policy act signed into law in 1970 in response to overwhelming public.

-Congressional mandate to declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment.

-Promote efforts, which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man.

-Enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation.

-Establish a council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

CEQ ensures that compliance with procedural provisions of NEPA thru RGSS.

-Intended purposes:

Improve agency decision making (fully informed and well considered decision).

Provide avenue for public involvement.

Scope of NEPA Analysis: directly linked to the nature of the federal action and expected environmental impacts.

Four types of NEPA Actions:

1- Categorical Exclusion (CX) action federal agencies have determined does not have significant impacts on the human environment. Meant to speed the decision making process. Still has to pass 10 exceptions of review to make sure that action fits for that proposed action.

2- Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) document which demonstrates and describes how the proposed action has existing sufficient analysis and documentation. Must answer yes to all 7 criteria.

3- Environmental Assessment (EA) when proposed action does not fall under a CX, DNA and obviously an EIS is not needed.

4- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) when proposed action is expected to have significant impacts on the environment.

- Larry Barngrover asked if NEPA is looked at only from that particular activity or are several different sources included.

- Chris Worthington answered that we need to identify the area around that action and review past actions (e.g. fence building) and we look at associated actions.

- Larry Barngrover asked are associated actions looked at or any action.

- Chris Worthington responded that any relevant action is looked at.

- Dave Tattam asked who pays for the review.

- Chris Worthington answered that for an EIS or EA there are cost recovery funds that the proponent provides.

- Dave Tattam responded there is money coming in, could it be used to hire more staff.

- Jerry Smith remarked that it takes approximately six-nine months to complete the hiring process. He also added that the NEPA decisions are different types that they depend on the program and regulations that go with them. For an EIS related to mining BLM is required to do a cost recoverable decision and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Most grazing related documents are paid for by the government. The permittee does not usually pay for these documents. Wild Horse and Burro EAs are done internally. Jerry added that it does not always pay to bring a person on for one project; we like to use term staff that can be used for up to four years if the project needs.

- Dave Tattam asked about third parties.

- Jerry Smith responded that the proponent hires a third party firm and we (BLM) are the quality control.

- Larry Barngrover asked about the impacts from projects, can they come from natural impacts (fires).

- Chris Worthington responded yes; BLM needs to consider the cumulative impacts of the fire.

- Jerry Smith gave example of the Cortez mine where there are 3 EISs on pits – BLM needs to look at footprint for cumulative impacts. There was concern of overall impacts from Native American tribes so we took in a larger area. We looked at wildfire overall impacts not just mining, but what other impacts have affected the area.

- Larry Barngrover commented about the fires in Elko; the footprint is large.

- Chris Worthington added that BLM must develop mitigation impacts.

- Larry Barngrover asked could there be previous impacts that are mitigated.

- Chris Worthington answered yes, that can be done. Cumulative impacts are the one area that our opponents have been successful litigating. It is related to inadequate analysis (cumulative). It does not have to be perfect to be defensible but need to be able to show why we made those decisions.

- Kevin Lee asked what is the timing (how long is the EIS good for).

- Chris Worthington responded that they are looked at individually, depends on what the action is.

- Kevin Lee asked does BLM use FONSI as well.

- Chris Worthington responded yes. At the end of our EIS we develop a decision record and FONSI which is a rational summary.

- Jerry Smith commented that the South Western Intertie Project (SWIP) is good example.

- Jeff Weeks added that when the ROW was issued there was no notice to proceed.

- Jerry Smith said that the hang-ups were that they could not connect with Las Vegas.

- Ken Miller stated that the ROD was signed in 1993. The EIS was done and the ROW grant was issued from Las Vegas to Twin Falls. When the ROD was reviewed the question was has it been too long? Need to do a determination of NEPA adequacy, what has changed (there are seven questions). The south end held up. An EA was done for some route changes. For the north end, in reviewing the adequacy – we're looking at fires, etc., to see if it was covered adequately.

- John Ruhs added that the Idaho BLM will do an EA to uphold its portion.

- Ken Miller commented there is a different route that needs to be done and they are working that issue (cultural).

- Kevin Lee asked on a project that size was there NEPA for each region.

- Ken Miller responded that the EIS would cover whole project. Each district is looking at their portions.

- Kevin Lee commented that economics plays into it as well.

- Chris Worthington asked why it has taken so long.

- Ken Miller commented about economics - the ROW is in place but we are dealing with things outside our world.

- Jeff Weeks added that for Idaho Power given the ROW and with the power plants moving into the area, it opens up that ability (more feasible). They could not financially do it before.

- Ken Miller commented that the determination of NEPA adequacy makes good logic and a strong case.

- Chris Worthington added that bringing the proponent in and going through the criteria and questions is a good way to let them know the internal BLM process.

- Neal Frakes asked how you deal with uncertainty.

- Chris Worthington responded that we have to go with the best science available and information at the time. If you anticipate you can include mitigation in the document.

- John Ruhs added that cultural is a good example – to have cultural staff on site.

- Jerry Smith remarked on a mining study on sage grouse (10 years), they did an inventory of leks and what impacts of dispersing would be if power poles would be placed.

- Ken Miller added if cultural is done well, BLM can make the ROD include adaptive management. Wind projects ROW in Idaho monitoring is ongoing, if bird fatality is significant a meeting would be set up to possibly shut down turbines in an area. Adaptive management is discussed; manage so that as instances come up they can be dealt with.

- Neal Frakes commented that science availability is a challenge in the remote areas.

- Jerry Smith remarked that we are considered the experts; different opinions have to show that we erred in our judgment – they have to demonstrate that data was not used.

- Chris Worthington added that they are challenging the NEPA process, not challenging of the science.

- Pat Irwin said that judges do not judge the science, they judge the process.

- John Ruhs said that the agency has learned a lot. If we follow the process it is logical and sound. The key is the process; it is the time that the process takes is where we are challenged.

- Dave Tattam asked if the proponent incurs those costs.

- Jerry Smith answered yes, that costs are charged to cost recovery accounts.

Public Comment Period opened at 10:00a.m.

Kathy Smith and Marietta Carson from Ely, Nevada introduced themselves and said they were here to learn how the RAC works.

10:15 Break

10:30 Resume

III. EASTERN NEVADA LANDSCAPE COALITION PRESENTATION

- Neal Frakes gave the National Energy Corridor Project PowerPoint presentation. It is appended to the signed minutes on file at the BLM Elko Field Office.

Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition

The Mission of the ENLC:

To restore the dynamic and diverse landscapes of the Great Basin for present and future generations through collaborative efforts.

Why is there a need to form the ENLC?

Why is there a need to restore diversity and dynamic landscapes to the Great Basin?

Two Primary Concerns for Eastern Nevada:

- *Pinion-Juniper encroachment into sagebrush systems at higher elevations due to longer intervals between fires.*
- *Decadent, homogeneous stands of sagebrush at lower elevations due to longer intervals between fires.*

Additional Concerns:

- Invasion of non-native annual grasses and corresponding changes to the fire regime caused by the grass-fire cycle (fires become larger and more frequent)
- Invasion of noxious weeds

What to do:

Take an active role in directing/accelerating succession

- *Initiate restoration efforts on the ground over vast acreages.*
- *Collect good data to better understand what is occurring across the landscape and to determine where treatments are needed and where treatments are likely to be successful.*

How to Get the Work Done

Collaboration

Form Partnerships

- *Land Management Agencies*
- *Private Landowners*
- *Other Non-Profit Groups*

Why does ENLC collaborate?

- No one can do it alone
- Increased funding opportunities
- Greater diversity in expertise
- Shared resources and experiences
- Increased number of accomplishments on the ground

ENLC's Partners

Big Horns Unlimited

Bureau of Land Management

Ely Shoshone

Fillmore Utah, BLM Office

Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Great Basin Institute

Lincoln County, Nevada

Millard County, Utah

Nevada Cattlemen's Association

Nevada Department of Agriculture

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Nevada Farm Bureau Federation

Newark/Long Valley CWMA

Panaca CWMA

Private land owners and businesses

Railroad Valley CWMA

Red Rock Audubon Society

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Snake Valley CWMA

Southern Nevada Water Authority

Spring Valley CWMA

Steptoe Valley CWMA

The Nature Conservancy

Tri-County Weed Project

US Fish and Wildlife Service

US Forest Service

White Pine County, Nevada
White River Valley CWMA

Goals of the Two Projects

(Sagebrush Restoration in Smith Valley and Gleason Creek Watersheds)

- Restore ecological health of the watersheds
- Habitat restoration for sage grouse
- Fuels reduction (Wildland-Urban Interface)
- Learn – try different techniques, see what is most cost-effective

Sites Chosen For:

- Proximity to Ely
- Ecologically functional, but on declining trajectory

Treatments Performed

Gleason Creek: Hand Thinning and Brush Beating

Smith Valley: Lop and Scatter, Lop, Pile, and Burn, Bull-hog Masticator, Feller-Buncher and Chipper, and/or Vegetation Crusher (Bulldozers)

Diversity of Treatments at Smith Valley Site: *Ability to learn and adapt given results*

Initial Results from the projects appear positive (*but more to come later*)

Much of what we do at this point is collecting data

- Watershed assessments including minerals compliance, vegetation, and roads inventory
- Effectiveness of fire rehab treatments
- Spring surveys
- Herbarium specimens

Watershed Based Assessments

Purpose: Assess the ecological health of an area on a watershed scale

Helps determine if and where restoration treatments are needed

More of a holistic approach looking at a variety of information

Completed assessments in 2007 within watersheds:

- 1.2 million acres of vegetation data collection
- 1,033 miles of road and route inventories
- 138 minerals compliance inventories
- Worked with partner Tri-County Weed to inventory 955,000 acres for noxious weeds

Assistance with Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Program

Aerial Seeding: *A common Emergency Stabilization Treatment*

Involves applying a “seed mix” of different species at specified rates of application

Why Seed?

1. To Break the Grass-Fire Cycle
 - A. Reduce establishment and dominance of invasive plants and noxious weeds
 - B. Promote establishment of perennial vegetation (generally native grasses, shrubs, and forbs)
2. Stabilize T&E Species Habitat
3. Soil Stabilization (Minimize erosion)

Monitoring of ESR Treatment Effectiveness

In 2007, we collected data from 61 fires within Lincoln, White Pine and Nye Counties covering over 700,000 acres. Seeding treatments generally don't establish within the first growing season, but cheat grass generally does. Forb species can establish fairly quickly, perhaps quicker than native perennial grasses. Non-native forbs can be quite effective at establishing early on and out-competing cheat grass. Over time, seeded perennial grass species can become established and out-compete cheat grass and other weeds.

Education and Outreach

3rd Annual Winter Weed Workshop: February 27-28

8th Annual Workshop and Field Tour: June 13-14

Learn more about ENLC and become a member at

www.envlc.org

775-289-7974

Neal: nof_enlc@sbcglobal.net

Betsy Macfarlan, Executive Director:

enlc@sbcglobal.net

- Ken Miller asked if vast acreage means on a landscape scale.
- Neal Frakes answered, yes.
- John Ruhs commented that through collaboration you get shared ownership which goes across the board for success and failures.
- Pat Irwin asked if most cost effective at Smith Valley.
- Julie Thompson commented that chaining is cheapest. Vegetation crushers are used in small plots. The bull hog masticator is the next most aesthetically pleasing.
- Ken Miller asked if it was used on trees.
- Julie Thompson responded that it used on brush and trees.
- Pat Irwin asked if ENLC has a masticator.
- Julie Thompson commented that you could rent one from Wheeler Machinery.
- Neil added that results are many years out.
- Ken Miller asked if control burns are used.
- John Ruhs answered that they were used in Gleason and the data will be available. New technology was used for seeding using land satellite inventory. We did quality checks to make sure that it was natives that were coming in.
- Larry Barngrover questioned large projects, do we need monotypic areas. More moderate projects and restoration efforts would be more successful if done over a period of time.

- Neal Frakes stated that he did not mean monotypic large projects – we’re looking at creating a mosaic. Funding limits the size. He added that we’re looking at historically what was it like and try to mimic.
- Julie Thompson added that ENLC is in agreement, but that the public wants more. We are still learning from the treatments.
- Larry Barngrover said that they need to be large enough to be economic.
- Pat Irwin stated that the budgets will control this.
- John Ruhs commented that the key is watershed assessments. We can identify those key areas that will have the successes and need to use the toolbox so that we will have the mosaic.
- Julie Thompson added that the focus is on Wyoming sage.
- Pat Irwin remarked that by looking at watersheds, you can identify where treatments are needed the most, can focus on those areas and where you get the best bang for the buck. It will then be effective in the treatment as well as cost effective.
- Larry Barngrover added we need to advocate moderation. The size of fires in Elko was astounding; we do not want to duplicate.
- Kevin added that fire is different.
- Julie Thompson stated that this area is different ecologically also.
- Larry Barngrover reminded everyone that cheat grass was not in White Pine County in the 1970s. Sometimes things change so slowly that it is not recognized yearly.
- Jerry Smith mentioned that Battle Mountain is trying different techniques; it comes down to funding where treatment can be to be successful. They will introduce chaining again.
- Ken Miller discussed getting with Neal Frakes and ENLC to discuss possible projects and what options may be available, and where ENLC could participate in these processes.
- Neal Frakes responded that they can do work in the Great Basin.
- John Ruhs stated that through the White Pine County Lands Bill ENLC can focus basin-wide through agreements.

IV. ELY RMP UPDATE

Jeff Weeks (AFM Nonrenewable Resources, Ely Field Office) gave the Ely Resource Management Plan update.

PMRP/FEIS Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register November 29, 2007.

The 30-day protest period ended on December 30, 2007.

Received six protest letters.

Determined standing of the six that were filed with the Washington Office.

1. Clay Iverson
2. Center for Biological Diversity
3. Cindy MacDonald
4. Western Watersheds Project (2)
5. Craig Downer

Identify germane issues for protest letters with standing (NSO & WO).

Draft responses to the issues.

Concurrent 60-day Governor's consistency review ended on January 30, 2008:

Received two comment letters from the state:

1. State Engineer
2. NDOW

Draft responses to the letters.

Biological Assessment/Biological Opinion

Submitted Biological Assessment in October 2007 to USFWS.

Work with the FWS to receive a Biological Opinion on the proposed plan.

Next Steps:

Work with the Director to resolve protests

Receive BO from the USFWS

Make changes to the Proposed RMP based on protests resolution and terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion.

Mail out Approved Plan and Record Of Decision

People/organizations have to have participated in some form in the process to participate in the final review.

- A question was asked about who is the Center for Biodiversity?

- Jerry Smith clarified that they started in Arizona and expanded to Oregon.

- Jeff Weeks said their issues included the BLM needed to consider a range of alternatives, global warming, and follow laws of the NEPA process.

- Dave Tattam asked about the horse issue.

- Jeff Weeks responded that it is for combined Herd Management Areas and elimination in some due to lack of cover food, etc.

- Pat Irwin asked what the issue is.

- Jeff Weeks said that it was stated that it was illegal and violates law. We are working with the Washington Office and Nevada State Office for responses, and we're working with the State Director to resolve protests.

- Pat Irwin questioned whether a protest is not an appeal.

- Jeff Weeks said no, it is a protest; someone always has the ability to litigate.

- Larry Barngrover asked when it will be approved.

- Jeff Weeks answered we are looking at late this summer July-August. We're still waiting for the Biological Opinion and protests to be resolved.

- Jerry Smith asked how long has Ely Field Office been working on the RMP.

- Jeff Weeks responded for six years.

- Pat Irwin discussed that in the Final EIS, people will be restricted to existing roads and trails.

- John Ruhs added that we will go thru the Technical Review Team process. It will go into effect once signed.

- Jerry Smith asked if Ely will do travel management for whole district.

- Jeff Weeks answered yes

- Larry Barngrover asked if it was the same contractor for the whole timeframe.

- Jeff Weeks answered that it has been the same contractor.

- Jerry Smith mentioned that Battle Mountain will be able to use Ely's and Winnemucca's plans to work on theirs. We will revise Tonopah's at the same time.

- Jeff Weeks added that Ely had two public lands bills that took effect in the timeframe and that those effects will have to be redone.

- Larry Barngrover asked how long the RMP will last before modifications would need to be made.

- Jeff Weeks answered that before the ink dries it will need to be amended. The West Wide Corridor will amend it.

- John Ruhs stated that if sage grouse gets listed or changes in oil and gas - will also amend it.

- Jeff Weeks stated that the plan has about 20 years of life.

- Jerry Smith added that doing amendments will make the document last longer.

- Jeff Weeks commented that we are looking at making the improved plan a web-based idea. The public would be able to see a current RMP and maintenance would be more efficient.

Lunch 11:30

Resume 1:00

V. HEALTHY LANDS INITIATIVE

Joe Tague from the Nevada State Office gave the Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI) presentation via phone and PowerPoint.

Secretary's Message

- *In February 2007, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced the Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI), a new approach to meeting emerging challenges in resource management with broad, landscape-scale restoration and conservation work designed to achieve results at an accelerated pace. Many of the lands in HLI emphasis areas are sagebrush or sage-steppe ecosystems.*

What is HLI?

- *The Healthy Lands Initiative represents a new concept for meeting emerging challenges in managing natural resources with flexible, landscape-level approaches for continued multiple use.*
- *The Initiative is characterized by the broad scale of the acreage it will seek to restore and conserve, and the accelerated pace at which results are expected.*
- *The Initiative will enable and encourage local BLM managers to set priorities and manage across landscapes and mitigate impacts to an array of resources in ways not previously available to them.*

Why is it necessary?

- *Demand for a variety of public land uses and products in the U.S. is at an all-time high because of the country's changing demographics and needs.*
- *Land health is being affected by pressures such as community expansion, increasingly catastrophic wildfires, unmatched demand for energy resources, ever-expanding recreation uses, and weed invasion.*
- *These pressures often interact among themselves to affect large landscapes and ecosystems.*
- *Taking aggressive steps now will help avoid imposed restrictions on uses of public land that would directly affect the nation's security and quality of life.*
- *Healthy lands yield healthy economies at every level, from local to national.*

How does it work?

- *The landscape-level approach is the first step, and will be focused so as to realize results in one to three years.*

- *HLI gives managers flexibility to identify lands where a particular resource might be emphasized in order to encourage sustained health and balance across a broader landscape or ecosystem.*
- *Partnerships are an integral part of the Initiative. Public-private cooperation, incentives for landowners and private industry, and other non-traditional approaches will engage stakeholders while leveraging additional funds and resources.*
- *Provides additional funding to accelerate projects in addition to existing base funding.*

Where are the current HLI Emphasis Areas?

- *Oregon-Idaho-Nevada Shrub Steppe Restoration*
- *Southern Idaho Snake River Plain*
- *Wyoming – Green River Basin*
- *Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative*
- *Colorado Landscape Conservation*
- *New Mexico Landscape Restoration*

What is the Oregon-Idaho-Nevada Shrub Steppe Restoration

- *Accelerate implementation of habitat restoration projects identified in State and local sage-grouse conservation plans to maintain and restore the upland and riparian components of these shrub lands.*
- *A partnership between the three BLM states and the three State Wildlife Agencies in Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho.*

What has been done?

■FY 2007 - Nevada BLM received \$155,000

- **All Funding went to Elko Field Office for:**
- **500 Acres of Weed Treatments**
- **1,200 Acres of Native Grass, Shrub, & Forbs Drill Seeding**
- **These projects were in the Owyhee Desert and Tuscarora Sage-Grouse Population Management Units**

■FY 2008 – Nevada BLM received \$200,000

- **There are two projects in Elko and one in Winnemucca**
- **3,200 Acres of Native Plant Seeding**
- **1,400 Acres of Weed Treatments**

What is HLI's future?

- *HLI is evolving into the BLM's Healthy Lands Priority.*
- *Healthy Lands would be the foundation for all our management actions.*

- Driven by ecological changes and population demographics.
- Will focus BLM's resources on projects that will move around to meet Regional Priorities.
- Accomplished through integrated planning, implementation, and monitoring across programs and jurisdictions.

What is the BLM Healthy Lands Priority?

▪*The goal of Healthy Lands is the conservation and restoration of habitats while providing for managed use.*

▪It will require a synthesis of existing information to identify priority areas in an ecological region for management action.

- This would identify resource issues that are a priority to address.

- Document actions to be taken to address the priority resource issues.

▪Sequence management actions for a period of time to focus effort to address the priority resource issues in the priority areas.

What is being done for Healthy Lands?

■ *Existing information is being synthesized for:*

▪The Great Basin using the current OR/ID/NV HLI project and cooperative structure. It will be based on the National and States Sage-Grouse Plans

▪The Mojave using a similar model to the Great Basin effort. This is a partnership between Nevada, Arizona, and Utah BLM, their State Wildlife Agencies and other agencies. It will be based on conserving and restoring desert tortoise habitat.

Conclusion:

HLI/Healthy Lands is a way of doing business that:

- Focuses scarce resources (personnel & funding) to highest priority areas.
- Uses partnerships to increase the accomplishments in the priority areas.
- Collaborative process to jointly identify and focus actions on priority areas in the eco-region.

Looking at landscape level restoration - focus funding to accelerate pace.

Integrated approach to restore and approach focus resources.

Cheat grass in Nevada take aggressive steps to avoid taking steps for restrictions.

How does it work (guidelines).

Focus priority areas and get others to visualize.

Focus on sage grouse and energy- Nevada partnership for three states and wildlife agencies unique for funding aspect.

To be competitive with funding we will have to show that we have a good sound plan for the funds.

- Larry Barngrover commented on the financial scope, anticipated it to being larger.

- Joe Tague added that funding is limited for an initiative this size. Appropriation asked for \$5 million. We will be getting \$3 million in 2008. There is not any new money out there and it has to come from somewhere. Nevada competes with Oregon and Idaho for 2008 funds.

- Larry Barngrover commented on the emphasis on sage grouse and desert tortoise; will this expand in scope as funding increases.

- John Ruhs added that the initiative was a starting point years ago, there are not many ways to get additional funds. It is a mechanism to get on-the-ground dollars for that area.

- Larry Barngrover asked if this could conceivably develop into more funds, as he thought that it would be larger in scope.

- Jerry Smith commented that the money is very hard to get. Right now there is the potential that it will bring money in future.

- Dave Tattam commented that this is similar to ENLC - using partners and other funding to accomplish the projects.

- John Ruhs stated that it has become an umbrella initiative starting with fuel projects under HLI.

- Larry Barngrover said he is surprised that we are talking about sage grouse plans, needs to be focused on species. It should take a broad spectrum of land and habitat types.

- John Ruhs added that it is hard for us to manage for one species.

- Pat Irwin commented that we cannot afford to look at it that way; we need to focus on areas.

- Neal Frakes asked if managing for sage grouse are you covering some other species.

- Pat Irwin added that sage grouse is an indicator species.

- John Ruhs added that one thing that was not mentioned is the current State Director is in tune with HLI and trying to get it into a long-term program.

VI. RANGE/GRAZING PERMIT RENEWALS UPDATE

Battle Mountain District

Jerry Smith distributed a handout and said that Battle Mountain is on track for completing term permit renewals. He believes that permits will be processed by deadline.

- Neal Frakes asked what has led to working smoothly with Western Watersheds.
- Jerry Smith responded that he is not sure that it is smooth. There was a lot of collection of data. Permittees were involved throughout the process. Battle Mountain has had meetings and involvement with Western Watersheds. When issuing decisions Western Watersheds protested but did not appeal. Each allotment has its own issues.
- Jerry Smith added that riparian areas can lose two years of utilization if over used.
- Dave questioned the role of the permittees in the monitoring process.
- Jerry Smith stated that Art Gale was the pilot permittee for the project but he has moved on.
- John Ruhs agreed that we need more involvement from the permittees.
- Jerry Smith remarked that a lot have gone to range schools (permittees) and they also hire consultants to collect the data.
- Ken Miller added that the opportunity is there for them but it is tough to take advantage of (workloads, etc).
- Larry Barngrover commented that he hopes they take it seriously. Do you want to have strong penalties something more then notification.
- Jerry Smith discussed establishing “triggers” under terms and conditions and do 1-2 year evaluations where they were exceeded and make changes. We have opportunities to move livestock if needed or make further adjustments.
- Kirk Nicholes asked who monitors the triggers.
- Jerry Smith responded we’re trying to get permittee to take that lead.
- Pat Irwin asked what did Battle Mountain do with Western Watersheds to not appeal.
- Jerry Smith answered that we have been working with them steadily in the whole process. After field tours we would sit down and discuss options of what can be done to rectify any situations that may have been seen.

Ely District

John Ruhs gave the Ely District update. In November and December 2007, the District issued 18 final decisions for term permit renewals (TPR), which included 12 final decisions and 15 allotments in the Mojave-Southern Great Basin area, and 6 final decisions and 5 allotments in the northeastern Great Basin area. The BLM is preparing to issue 6 additional final decisions. The 6 final decisions include 6 allotments in the northeastern Great Basin area. Two term permits were not protested and have not been appealed. Term permits will be issued.

The Ely District has scheduled 44 term permits to initiate and fully process in FY 2008. This is in addition to the 26 term permit renewals identified above. This includes 11 term permits in the Schell Field Office, 18 in the Egan Field Office and 15 in the Caliente Field Office. The 44 TPRs includes a total of 74 allotments. This includes 15 allotments for the Schell Field Office, 31 for the Egan Field Office area and 28 for the Caliente Field Office. The 46 allotments for Egan and Schell are all within the Northeastern Great Basin Area. The 28 allotments within the Caliente Field Office are all located within the Mojave-Southern Great Basin Area.

- Chris Worthington asked if appeal points are all the same.
- John Ruhs responded that they are mostly the standard appeal.
- Pat Irwin asked if a decision on appeal had been received yet.
- John Ruhs answered not yet, the stay has been denied.
- Jerry Smith added that we need to get more management in place – we need to redo or retune our management. Western Watersheds looks at the renewals and sees that no downward adjustments are being done so they fight all these renewals.

Elko District

Ken Miller gave the Elko District update. Elko has 241 allotments. We have completed 36 renewals and all were appealed by Western Watersheds. We're using Battle Mountain's model with Western Watersheds to bring them into the process. Elko has 27 this year to complete, last year we completed 12. We are looking at other options for completing the renewals, possibly through an EIS.

- Larry commented that environmental communities have come a long way. Standards and guidelines are very important; they are done so that we can continue to see improvements.

Jerry Smith discussed grazing is getting better all the time, you do see improvements. Where thresholds have been crossed you have to get out there and make a change or manipulate (physically). If forage ability goes down they will have to take cuts - permittees will not have a choice.

- Kevin Lee commented that there will always be one of them out there that does not follow the rules.

VII. OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE REPORTS

Battle Mountain District

Jerry Smith commented that Battle Mountain is still working on the Shoshone OHV Trail. Compromising with groups will use a phased in approach and will have thresholds. We are continuing to inventory the routes, concentrating on wilderness study areas first. We're looking at rehabbing unauthorized routes in WSAs.

Ely District

John Ruhs said they're working with the Silver State Technical Review Team group. They will be making a presentation at the CRM meeting. The NEPA is finished for the southern portion of the Silver State Trail. A White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006-mandated study is underway to determine the possibility and need for the Silver State Trail to continue into White Pine County. The study is scheduled to begin in late winter or early spring 2008 and be completed by December 2009. The BLM in April 2007 rescinded its Decision Record for the Lost Ox trail, signed in February 2006. The BLM will review the need for this type of project and, if having determined that a clear need exists, establish a working group to re-evaluate the trail project.

- Dave Tattam asked if the rock crawling group is still interested in the district.

- John Ruhs answered yes.

Elko District

- Ken Miller said the focus is on Spruce Mountain draft plan for 2008. We're working on travel management - 553 roads and trails have been inventoried will include designated areas (seasonably). Ten traffic counters were used for data collection.

- Larry Barngrover questioned how big of an area is included.

- Ken Miller responded that it comes out quite a ways and it includes historic properties. The plan will be out 2008.

- Larry Barngrover asked about guidelines for trail density.

- Ken Miller responded that the recreation planners probably have the information.

- Jerry Smith added that the recreation planners have and use a lot of that information. Utah used a contractor (ex-BLM) to help lay out the trails.

- Dave Tattam asked if established trails will be used of take off across country.

- Jerry Smith commented the trail will be on existing roads or trails.

No Mining update

VIII. FIELD MANAGER AND DISTRICT RANGER REPORTS

- Jerry Smith provided an ESR handout that was left out of the packet.

- Dave Tattam said you have not had a lot of moisture and asked about the successes that the District had.

- Kevin Lee questioned on page seven regarding water quality of Carrico allotment.

- Jerry Smith stated that out of everything, we have to meet the standards for Nevada. We're continuing monitoring of the site.

- Kevin Lee asked not just one area.
- Jerry Smith answered, yes.
- Dave Tattam asked about the Antelope Valley land sale.
- Jerry Smith answered that it has been designated for disposal.
- Ken Miller commented that fire closures are not shown. Seven closures sent out for comment and comments received. There are 13 more to go and we're opening a closure from 2005 fire.
- Larry Barngrover asked to identify time or condition.
- Ken Miller responded that historically it was said for two growing seasons.
- Neal Frakes asked about treatments - aerial treatments and how much planned.
- Ken Miller stated that 127,000 acres have been planned.
- Pat Irwin questioned if there was any trouble getting seed.
- Ken Miller answered Elko got seed for what they had money to purchase.
- Larry Barngrover commented that he is impressed with Ely's fire and fuel projects that are identified.
- John Ruhs stated that the program had success last year and will see it this year also.
- Larry Barngrover questioned the chemical treatment. Is it a cheat grass treatment.
- John Ruhs answered in North Antelope, some will be treated chemically.
- Neal Frakes questioned the Ely Energy Center proposed site location (20 miles from Ely).
- John Ruhs stated that there are two sites one preferred and one proposed site.
- Neal Frakes questioned that if it is still planned near the Duck Creek junction.
- John Ruhs responded, yes.

Forest Service Update

Pat Irwin gave the Forest Service Update. They're working on range NEPA and have multiple allotment EISs. They are divided east and west half for the district. They have prepared a Draft EIS and a group is looking at issues and making recommendations for appeals by Western Watersheds. There is a lack of soil survey.

They do enforce excess utilization in areas.

On travel management we will be doing an EA and will produce a map for designated roads and trails – which will be used as an enforcement tool. 625 proposed trails add 251 miles of motorized trail (jeep trail) and closes 700 miles of two-track trails. They're doing cultural surveys on the 251 miles. The EA should be out this summer.

On August 28 there will be the White Pine and Grant Quinn oil and gas leasing - 255,000 acres open with restrictions.

Mining – the Taylor Mill closed in 1991 and is reopening for silver. 27 holes near Taylor Peak and Cooper Wash will be core drilled for molybdenum.

They received wind anemometers and a new application for north and south of the Schells from East Wind Inc.

The fuels team did a 3700-acre burn on Currant Summit on the south side of the road. In Round 8, SNPLMA proposed a project for North Currant Range to do a 5000-acre burn. In North Schell Creek Range a 70,000-acre treatment will do 20,000-acre treatments of pinion-juniper, aspen and white fir. A project on Ward Mountain is a BLM combined SNPLMA project for Round 9 of 120,000 acres.

Kevin Lee moved the meeting adjourn and the motion was seconded by Neal Frakes. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Minutes by Stephanie Trujillo and Mike Brown